

Editorial:

Political Transformations, Endogenous Factors and Non-Political Actors

Starting with the current issue (Spring 2013), STSS will have a short editorial to present the articles and update the readers on the journal. The spring issue is extremely important for us (the editorial team), as it is the first one we are publishing after STSS has been admitted into SCOPUS. This has happened only 4 years after its creation and most credits go to Raivo Vetik, who came up with the idea of a journal (STSS) and served as editor-in-chief for the first three years.

From fall 2011, another important introduction has been the election of two editors-in-chief, one from each of the funding institutes of STSS (the Institute of International and Social Studies and the Institute of Governance and Political Sciences of Tallinn University). This also means a slight differentiation of issues. In the fall we will be more sociologically-oriented, and in the Spring governance will be our starting point, although interdisciplinary approaches are always more than welcome and both editors draw from several cognate discipline themselves.

The leading theme of this issue is the influence of endogenous factors on political transformation. In particular, in this issue we explore the relationship between political and other (non-state) actors, a topic that has been re-evaluated in the aftermath of the colour revolutions and, more recently, the Arab Spring. In the 1990s, a large body of scholarship suggested that civil society in Eastern Europe and in former socialist spaces in general was mostly inactive. Research on social capital seemed to suggest that the West was far more advanced in this respect. However, recent events in several world regions, named 'colour revolutions' by many, have provided theoretical and empirical evidence to show that civil society in post-socialism was not dormant. In former socialist spaces, social capital, often considered the starting point of a vibrant civil society (Fukuyama, 1999, Roberts 2005), was simply organised in a different way in Eastern Europe. Pichler and Wallace (2007) have introduced the term 'informal social capital' to suggest that social capital is structured in different ways, depending on the socio-cultural settings in which it is embedded. Following this assumption, it has been suggested that social capital in post-socialist space was not absent but simply had to be measured in a different way (Ó Beacháin & Polese, 2010), and that colour revolutions have brought around, at least in some cases, the formalisation of social capital in Eastern Europe (Polese, 2009).

Aware that civil society and non-state actors deserve more attention, we have built this issue on tangible and intangible phenomena. The first article (Amy & Gjermeni, 2013) analyses the reasons why Albanian civil society has been largely unable to facilitate early hopes of a democratic transformation. In particular, it is contended that the main reasons why civil society has failed to have an impact on political change in Albania so far is not only the unaddressed legacy of a totalitarian regime but also, and perhaps more importantly, the distinctly gendered tracks along which civil society and government have developed. This has also been made possible by a sort of complicity of international structures in inhibiting the deeply analytical culture of knowledge production necessary to shift the relation of the individual to the state.

The second article (Hristova Kurzydowski, 2013) maps the role of civil society organisations in the programming process and identifies the main challenges and opportunities in their inclusion. The article is concerned with the application of the principle of partnership in Bulgaria in programming EU funds for 2007-2013 as a litmus test for the capacity of the civil society and the state institutional preparedness for fully-fledged membership. The article displays evidence that adaptational misfit and

leftovers of the previous institutional establishment filter the EU leverage in this field. The research here presented builds upon empirical data from a project of the Open Society Institute – Sofia 2010-2011 (Analysis and Assessment of the Application of the Partnership Principle in the programming of the EU funds in Bulgaria for the 2007-2013 period) and is well documented through in-depth interviews and the results of a second project, The Public Partnership – a Condition for Institutional Efficiency and Fight against Corruption.

The following article (Anglely, 2013) examines the role of civic groups in Georgia's Rose Revolution using Larry Diamond's framework of the democratic functions of civil society. However, it is contended that Kmara was a product of the coordinated involvement of a cohort of NGOs, stressing the interconnected nature of Georgian civic leaders and organisations, particularly regarding networks with other NGOs, opposition politicians, and journalists from the Rustavi 2 television station.

The fourth article (Kevlihan, 2013) is intended to make the reader aware of the strengths and weaknesses of different comparative approaches when studying Central Asia. In particular, the article reviews and critiques one approach to comparative analysis that has become increasingly dominant in social science research, arguing for a more inclusive and pragmatic approach to comparative analysis both in Central Asia and to case study comparisons, more generally, as the best way to advance our understanding of important social and political phenomena.

The last article (White, 2013) deals with political opportunities (and lack thereof) in Russia and argues that exogenous factors over which the liberal parties have had no control (the marginalisation of opposition, the restriction of media access and the huge imbalance of resources available to political parties in Russia) have played a major determining role in the liberals' decline. This seems to be a deliberate strategy through which political opposition has been systematically excluded and fragmented, the aim being not just to restrict but also close off any potential opportunities. The article recalls the endless debate on democratisation that is the object of our book review.

Levitsky and Way's book has been reviewed several times, but Raun (2013) offers a new perspective. While praising the impressive approach by the authors, he also points at aspects that need further elaboration, such as the use of two parallel approaches that contradict one another and neglect all of these other hybrid regimes in their discussion of regime paths out of competitive authoritarianism. This does not prevent Raun from praising the book, which has been one of the most influential ones of the last decade.

References

- Amy, L. & Gjermeni, E. (2013). Where is the 'State' in Albania? The Unresolved Contradictions Confronting Civil Society in the 'Transition' from Communism to Free Markets. *Studies of Transition States and Societies*, 5(1), 7-21.
- Anglely, R. (2013). Escaping the Kmara Box: Reframing the Role of Civil Society in Georgia's Rose Revolution. *Studies of Transition States and Societies*, 5(1), 42-57.
- Fukuyama, F. (1999). *Social Capital and Civil Society*. Paper delivered at the IMF Conference on Second Generation Reforms, 8-9 November 1999, Washington DC (IMF Headquarters).
- Kevlihan, R. (2013). Designing Social Inquiry in Central Asia – A Case Study of Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan. *Studies of Transition States and Societies*, 5(1), 58-68.

- Hristova Kurzydowski, D. (2013). Programming the EU funds in Bulgaria: Challenges, Opportunities and the Role of Civil Society. *Studies of Transition States and Societies*, 5(1), 22-41.
- Ó Beacháin, D. & Polese, A. (2010). 'Rocking the Vote': New Forms of Youth Organization in Post-Communist Spaces. *Journal of Youth Studies*, 10(2), 1-16.
- Pichler, F. & Wallace, C. (2007). Patterns of Formal and Informal Social Capital in Europe. *European Sociological Review*, 23(4), 423-435.
- Polese, A. (2009). Ukraine 2004: Informal Networks, Transformation of Social Capital and Coloured Revolutions. *Journal of Communist Studies and Transition Politics*, 25(2-3), 255-277.
- Raun, A. (2013). How to Survive the Western Democratizing Pressure? [Review of the book *Competitive Authoritarianism: Hybrid Regimes After the Cold War*, by S. Levitsky & L. A. Way]. *Studies of Transition States and Societies*, 5(1), 85-88.
- Roberts, W. T. (2005). The Uneven Globalization of Civil Society Organizations and the Consequences for Cross-national Disparities in Human Development. *International Journal of Sociology and Social Policy*, 25(1-2), 118-144.
- White, D. (2013). Russian Liberalism in Crisis? Khodorkovsky Revisited. *Studies of Transition States and Societies*, 5(1), 69-84.